

WELCOME II (Portugal)

Promoting the return of researchers to the European Research Area

Evaluation Guide

September 2010



The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) is responsible for the evaluation and selection process regarding proposals submitted by the applicants of the Welcome II Programme.

In order to carry out the evaluation, all documents related to the Programme will be made available both to panel coordinators, evaluators and ethics reviewers.

I - Evaluation procedures

Composition of panels

FCT will identify, beforehand, international prestigious scientists in the different research areas and will invite them to assume the role of panel coordinators and to monitor the evaluation process.

On their turn, panel coordinators will identify names of evaluators within their different research areas and sub-areas, and will contact them regarding their availability to carry out the evaluation procedures. Panel coordinators will then draw lists of evaluators that will be submitted to the President of FCT, for approval.

The FCT evaluator database for all scientific areas will be available.

FCT will ask panel coordinators to respect evaluators' gender balance and their fair geographic distribution and to involve, whenever possible, experts from industry, active in research.

Each project will be evaluated by at least two evaluators. If no consensus is reached between the two, a third evaluator, chosen from the list previously approved by FCT, will be invited. Panel meetings can be held on exceptional cases when no consensus is reached.

The role of panel coordinators

Panel coordinators will not evaluate proposals.

They will be in charge of:

- Appointing two foreign evaluators per research area and/or sub-area; in case that no consensus is reached, a 3rd evaluator will be invited to evaluate the proposal.
- Carrying out the screening of proposals regarding ethical issues, whenever applicable.
- Writing evaluation reports and drawing the ranking list.

The panel coordinators will be in charge of compiling the evaluation results; each evaluator will be asked to justify the final results of the evaluation and the coordinator should make recommendations regarding ranked vs. rejected proposals, based on the evaluation reports, by putting forward detailed arguments.

Conflicts of interest

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers will be considered in this procedure, as follows:

Conflicts of interest include:

Panel coordinator/evaluator was the PhD supervisor of the candidate
Panel coordinator/evaluator and candidate have joint publications
Panel coordinator/evaluator are from the same institution as the candidate

Prior to start the evaluation process, panel coordinators and evaluators will be asked to sign a

declaration confirming the inexistence of conflicts of interest in this particular evaluation process.

In case of existence of conflicts of interest regarding a panel coordinator he/she shall inform FCT. FCT will then appoint a third evaluator to evaluate the specific proposal where the conflict of interest was reported. This means that proposals where conflicts of interest exist between the applicant and the panel coordinator, there will be a mandatory evaluation by three evaluators, the third one being appointed by FCT.

In case of existence of conflicts of interest regarding evaluators, they shall inform their panel coordinator, who is bound to inform FCT, and will appoint another evaluator.

The declaration will also make reference to the fact that coordinators/evaluators are bound to strict confidentiality and to avoid any contact with the applicants at any time.

The list of Panel Coordinators and Evaluators will be published on the FCT website only after the final results of the evaluations have been made public.

Evaluation procedures

Immediately after the reception of proposals FCT will carry out all eligibility checks. Proposals that do not fulfill the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated.

Panel coordinators in each research field will be given access credentials that give them electronic access to all the applications submitted under that specific panel. They will then classify them according to the different research areas taking into consideration the title, abstract, scientific field and keywords of each application. Panel coordinators will then invite the evaluators whose names are included in the list previously approved by FCT, to carry out the evaluation, remotely; Portuguese evaluators may be invited, but their participation will not be higher than one third.

Each proposal will be evaluated by at least two different evaluators; for this, FCT will provide credentials to access the system. If no consensus is reached between the two evaluators, a third evaluator, chosen from the same list, can be invited.

Panel coordinators will carry out the screening of proposals regarding ethical issues, based on the information provided on the application forms, by the applicant, regarding ethics. If proposals raise doubts regarding such issues, experts on ethics will be contacted for opinion.

It is expected that each evaluator will evaluate 10 to 15 proposals, remotely. Each evaluator is expected to read and fill in an "evaluation form" with reference to marks/thresholds/weights for each single proposal. In case that no consensus is reached, consensus meetings will be held.

Ranking of Proposals

In order to avoid distortions in the attribution of scores, ranking lists will be made per panel. Proposals will be ranked according to the scores obtained in the evaluation process. This will allow a balanced distribution in terms of research areas.

The FCT Board will be responsible for selecting the researchers to be funded, based on the evaluation reports.

Both researchers and host institutions will receive the results of the evaluations by e-mail. Researchers will receive information regarding the results of evaluation from week 20 after the launching of the Programme.

II - Criteria

Quality

All the applications must be marked from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) in the four evaluation criteria: S&T Quality; Researcher; Implementation and Impact. The ranking of proposals will be based on the weighting of the four criteria. The minimum thresholds are 3 for the S&T quality of the project and 3 for the researcher and the weight of each criterion is 30%, 30%, 20%, 20%, respectively.

S&T Quality of the Proposal	Researcher	Implementation	Impact
Threshold 3, Weighting:30%	Threshold 3, Weighting:30%	Weighting:20%	Weighting:20%
Priority in case of ex aequo: 2	Priority in case of ex aequo: 1	Priority in case of ex aequo: 4	Priority in case of ex aequo: 3
Scientific and technological quality of the project and Interdisciplinarity / multidisciplinary aspects	Research experience and results: projects, patents and publications, taking into account the years of experience	Quality of host organisation, including adequacy of infrastructures / facilities.	Improvement of employment conditions and/or career prospects
Quality of the research methodology	Independent thinking and leadership qualities	Feasibility and credibility of the project, including work plan	Potential of transferring new knowledge to host
Innovative aspects of the project in what regards the "state of the art" of research in that field	Match between the fellow's profile and project.	Management: Practical arrangements for the implementation and management of the scientific project	Potential for developing a lasting co-operation with the third country.
Timeliness and relevance of the project	Potential to acquire new knowledge		Contribution to European excellence and European Competitiveness
Host expertise in the field and quality of the group / supervisors	Benefit to the career of the researcher and degree of professional maturity		Potential and quality of lasting professional integration (expected career development)

In order to allow a reliable evaluation and to fulfill the above criteria, candidates and host institutions must submit proposals taking into consideration the following topics:

1. For the Candidate

S&T Quality of the Project

Scientific and technological quality of the project and interdisciplinarity /multidisciplinarity aspects
Quality of the training and research methodology
Innovative aspects of the project in what regards the “state of the art” of the research in the field
Timeliness and relevance of the project

Researcher

Match between the fellow’s profile and project.
Potential to acquire new knowledge
Benefit to the career of the researcher and degree of professional maturity

Impact

Improvement of employment conditions and/or career prospects
Potential of transferring new knowledge to host
Potential to develop a lasting co-operation with third country .
Contribution to European excellence and European Competitiveness
Potential and quality of lasting professional integration (expected career development)

2. For the host institution

S&T Quality of the host

Scientific and technological quality of the host, including interdisciplinarity.
Quality of research methodology
Innovative aspects of the project in what regards the “state of the art” of the research field
Timeliness and relevance of the project
Host expertise in the field and quality of the group/supervisors

Implementation

Quality of the host organisation, including adequacy of infrastructures/facilities.
Feasibility and credibility of the project, including work plan
Practical arrangements for the implementation and management of the scientific project

Impact

Potential of transferring new knowledge to host
Potential to develop a lasting cooperation with Third Country.
Contribution to European excellence and European Competitiveness
Potential and quality of lasting professional integration (expected career development).

III - Ethical issues during evaluation

Applicants and host institutions will be informed of the fact that applications have to comply with the ethical legislation, otherwise they will not be funded.

Applicants will have to fill in a specific form identifying ethically sensitive issues in their research proposal.

There are scientific areas that are excluded from funding and therefore will not be evaluated:

- Research activity aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes.
- Research activity intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings, which could make such changes heritable (Research related to cancer treatment of the gonads can be financed).
- Research activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Proposals involving any other ethical issues will be evaluated in any circumstance; however, FCT final decision regarding their inclusion in the ranked list will be made, subsequent to the opinion of the ethics reviewer.

In order to carry out ethics reviews, FCT will identify and invite external experts on ethics to participate in the exercise, in case of need.

During the evaluation process, the panel coordinators will carry out the screening of proposals regarding ethical issues. If the panel coordinator has doubts about the correctness/completeness of the information provided in the ethics form, one of the external experts on ethics would then be contacted for opinion.

In case the opinion of the ethics reviewer complies with national and FP7 regulations, the proposal will be funded. If the ethics reviewer provides a negative opinion due to a non-compliance with ethical and national legislation/ European Directives, the proposal will not be selected for funding.